Making the most of Microsoft Word

(Getting it to do the hard work for you).

Overview

This chapter covers some key ideas about using Word more effectively and efficiently. The point here is to **save time**. My experience suggests that most people don't know these basics.

What will you learn?
1. Setting up a **preferred font** and **paragraph spacing**. Required once only.
2. Using **heading styles** to define the structure of your document.
3. Creating a **Table of Contents** for your report.
4. Other lessons along the way.

Preferred font

As Word is delivered, the default font is Times New Roman, 10 point (72 points = 1 inch or 2.54 cm). Personally, I'm not keen on this font and 10 point is too small for most work, as you can see above.

I use **Tahoma, 11 pt** for most work. So, what do we have to do to make this our default, so that every new document comes up looking like that rather than using Microsoft's default?

First, you need to understand how Word works.

Word documents are made up of **paragraphs**. A paragraph ends when you press the **Enter** key.

Word attaches a **style** to each paragraph and the default style is called **Normal**, which you can usually see on the toolbar:

The style selection box on the toolbar –

Normal

What we have to do is **change the characteristics of the Normal style** and save them for next time we use Word.

Modifying the Normal style

Select **Format | Styles and Formatting**. This brings up the task pane on the right.

Scroll down and find **Normal** in the list.

Click on it and choose **Modify** from the dropdown menu:

Normal

Select All: Not Currently Used

Modify...

Delete...

Update to Match Selection

Select the font style and size (at least 11 pt):

Formatting
Tahoma   11

Next, check the box that says **Add to Template** to make the change permanent.

Click on **OK** to close the dialog box.

When you change the Normal style, many of the other styles will tend to change with it because they are derived from the Normal style. This is the easiest way to customise your Word documents.

Font: (Default) Tahoma, 11 pt, single, Space Before: 6 pt, Aut

☑ Add to template

Format ▾

Changes to styles are saved in the default **template**, a file called NORMAL.DOT. When you exit Word, the changes become permanent (or until you change them again as above).
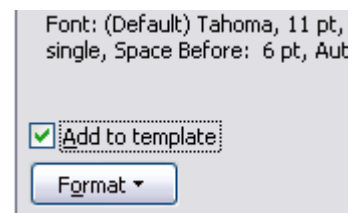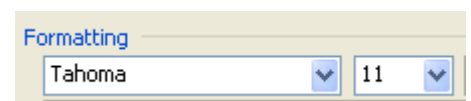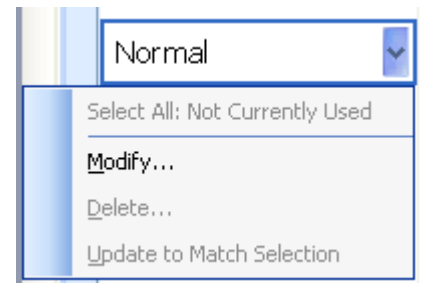
Paragraph spacing

OK. So now we have a decent font to work with and we know it's going to be there every time we use Word.

The next thing to set is the paragraph spacing.

Most people I have seen press the Enter key twice at the end of every paragraph – once to end the paragraph and the second time to create white space in front of the next paragraph.

It's much easier to ask Word to provide white space automatically for every paragraph.

So, it's back to **Format | Styles and Formatting**. Find the Normal style, click on it and choose Modify, as before.

This time, click on **Format** in the bottom left of the dialog box and choose **Paragraph** from the dropdown menu.

Next, set the paragraph properties in the **Indents and Spacing** tab. I always use 6 pt spacing before the Normal paragraphs. (A blank paragraph is about 12 pt).

This gives enough visual spacing between the paragraphs without wasting paper. This page has 6 pt spacing between paragraphs.

You may want to add some extra spacing around the Heading styles – more about them later.

Again, don't forget to check the **Add to Template** box and click OK.

Now you just have to retrain your brain to not press Enter twice at the end of every paragraph! ☺

Keep with Next

Have you ever had the problem of dangling headings at the end of a page, with the paragraph belonging to the heading pushed to the next page?

Word has a paragraph property called **Keep with Next** that will drag a heading onto the next page if the next paragraph gets placed there. However, it can't work if there's a blank paragraph between the heading and the next paragraph. That's why you shouldn't use blank paragraphs and why each paragraph needs to have its own **before** space, as described above.

Summary so far

We have now made the most basic customization of Word so it will always give us the right font style and size and basic inter-paragraph spacing. We've made these changes permanent using the **Add to Template** check box. Now it's time to use **Headings**.

Heading styles

Styles are a vital component in the efficient use of *Word.* If you don't use them, you are not making good use of the program's capabilities. We've already met the Normal style, which is the default style in Word.

A style generally applies to a **paragraph.** It combines all the attributes of text and the paragraph, eg justification, font type, size of font, border, etc. To assign a style to a paragraph, simply click in the paragraph and then choose the style from the list in the toolbar.

The style selection box on the toolbar –
Normal
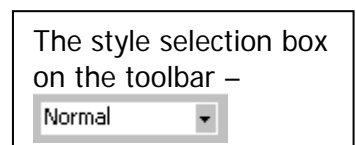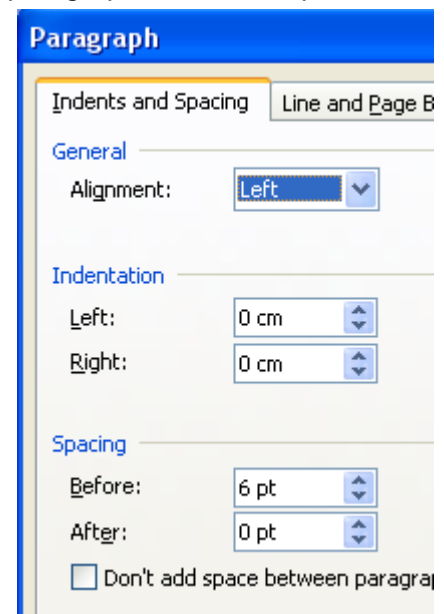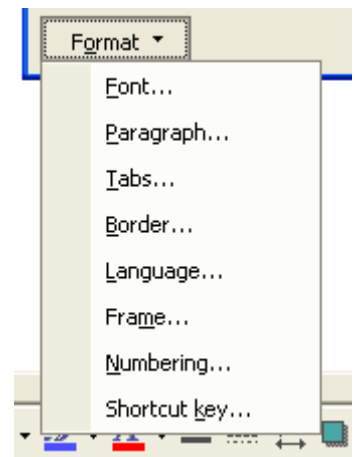
Note that the style box usually says **Normal** (for the Normal style). The drop down listbox will reveal all the available styles. Others are accessible through **Format | Styles and Formatting**.

You will quickly discover that a very small number of styles account for 95% of your work. For example, most documents are made up of **Normal, Heading 1, Heading 2**, **Heading 3** and **List bullet.** (The **Heading** styles allow us to differentiate between headings and text, and between headings at different levels).

The **Heading** styles define the hierarchical structure of your document, and they allow *Word* to assemble a Table of Contents for you.

Heading 1 should be used for chapters,
Heading 2 for sections,
Heading 3 for sub-sections, and so on.

A quick and easy way to change a paragraph to a heading style is to use the Alt-Ctrl-1 short cut sequence for Heading 1. Use 2 or 3 for Heading 2 and Heading 3.

Pressing Shift-Ctrl-N resets a paragraph to the Normal style.

Exercise:

Open TEST.DOC. Apply Heading styles as prompted.

Use the style box on the toolbar to access individual styles:

Normal .

Table of Contents

Having defined the Heading styles, Word now knows the structure of your document. You can ask it to compile a Table of Contents for you.

Exercise:

Go to the start of the TEST.DOC document where a space has been provided, and insert a Table of Contents using *Insert | Reference | Index and Tables*. Choose the *Table of Contents* tab.

Experiment with different styles of layout as shown in the dialog below.

Generally, a Table of Contents with two levels is sufficient. Word's default is 3 levels, which is usually too detailed.
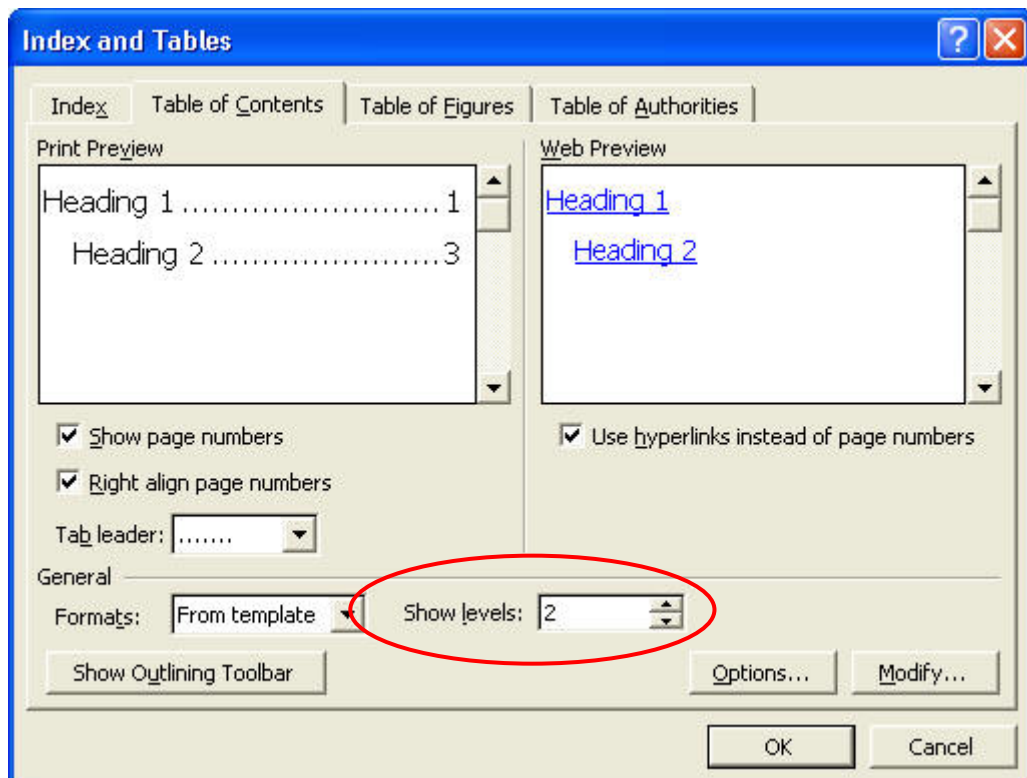
Updating

As you add new sections to your document, or delete old ones, your Table of Contents will need to be updated. Click anywhere in the Table of Contents and press the **F9 key**. Choose the option to update the whole table, not just page numbers.

Your Table of Contents will usually be automatically updated when you print.
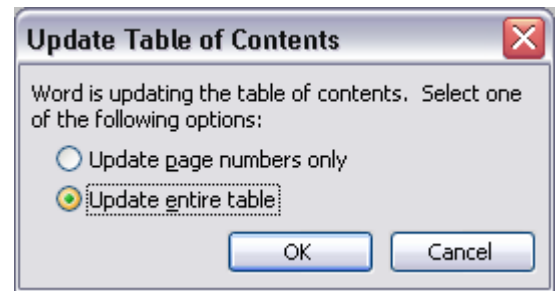
Customising styles

Now that you've created your first Table of Contents, it's time to learn how to customise the appearance of the various heading styles. We've already seen how to do this for the Normal style. Just repeat for the Heading styles.

- Add some extra space around the Headings to suit your personal taste.
- Also, choose different fonts and sizes. Be bold! Choose large font sizes and **never** use underlining.
- Make sure that **Keep with Next** is checked for each of the Heading styles (but not for the Normal style).

You can make **new styles** by typing a new name at the top of the dialog box, and then defining its attributes.

You can also make more radical changes by opening the template itself. You can save a template under a new name for a new type of document, eg report.dot, memo.dot, letter.dot, etc.

You will find the template files in C:\Documents and Settings\YourUserName\Application Data\Microsoft\Templates (in Windows XP). Note that the Application Data folder is hidden, to make it really difficult to find!

List Bullet

A really useful style is **List Bullet**, which I think comes standard in Word. You may want to customise it though. It is activated using Shift-Ctrl-L and is used for bulleted lists, of course. This is much better than using the bullet button on the toolbar because you always get exactly the same formatting and, if you want to change it, changing the style changes every list bullet in your document.

BTW, I use no spacing before bulleted list items, since they are usually meant to be part of one paragraph.

Other Tables

Word will also keep track of Tables of Tables, Figures, Equations, Index etc. These are all accessed through the **Insert | References** menu.

You can also insert footnotes, endnotes and cross-references.

Shortcut Keys

Key	Style
Shift-Ctrl-N	Normal
Shift-Ctrl-L	• List Bullet
Alt-Ctrl-1	**Heading 1**
Alt-Ctrl-2	**Heading 2**
Alt-Ctrl-3	**Heading 3**

Summary

What have we covered here?

1. Setting up a **preferred font** and **paragraph spacing** by modifying the Normal style.
2. Using **heading styles** to define the structure of your document.
3. Creating a **Table of Contents** for your report.
4. Using **Keep with Next** to avoid dangling headings.
5. Using the **List Bullet** style for bulleted lists.
6. Handy **shortcut keys**.

Report Writing

You can use the report template (called REPORT.DOC) to format larger documents. It contains all of the necessary formatting (and a table of contents) for a multiple page report.

See **Writing Reports** for a discussion of report writing and the use of this template with *Word*. This template should give you some clues to what can be achieved with templates. *Word* comes with many templates.

More information

There is more information on **Word** here:
http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/eng/BENG0001/LEARNING/Word/index.html